



SRQVolunteer participants during a book drive at Barnes & Noble, front row from left, Gillian Johnson, Juliette Stone, Brandon Villa, Mayra Arenas-Castillo and Larissza Kummer; middle row, Christian Robetor, Jordan Sabuda, Connor Murphy, Daylan MacDonald, Savannah Staley, Sawyer Pollard and Joseph Lu; and back row, Jackson Krizen, Nahyara Piedrahita, Erick Reynoso, Jakob Lawrence, Morgann Staub and Alondra Moreno. COURTESY PHOTO

Book drive benefits Forty Carrots

Middle school-age students participating in the current SRQVolunteer session are working to improve the literacy rates of Sarasota's children.

The teens took over "Storytime" at a Sarasota Barnes & Noble on June 22. After reading to preschoolers and assisting with arts and crafts, the SRQVolunteer class held

a book drive to benefit Forty Carrots Family Center. They collected more than 45 books.

On June 27, the SRQVolunteer participants read these books to preschoolers at Forty Carrots and then donated the books.

"It was a wonderful feeling to see the children smiling and laughing while we read to them," said 13-year-old

Brandon Villa. "It was amazing to see that they were already engaged in reading at a young age. It was definitely a very enjoyable experience."

The Community Youth Development's SRQVolunteer program is designed to connect teens to volunteer service. Middle and high school students earn community service hours while learning valuable

employment skills such as team-building, problem-solving and networking.

The youths also discover their strengths, aptitudes and passions while supporting causes, according to organizers. For more information or to register for the fall session, go to cydonline.org/programs/srqvolunteer.

— Submitted by Sharon Kunkel